



## **Statement on the Separation of Immigrant Children from Parents at the US Border**

**World Refugee Day - June 20, 2018**

On this World Refugee Day, as people of faith and of conscience, the Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office strongly condemns the United States' policy reversing protections for asylum seekers fleeing domestic abuse and gang violence, and the "zero tolerance" policy that has resulted in the inhumane and deliberate separation of immigrant children and parents at the United States border. We call for an immediate end to these cruel and immoral policies, which have an especially harmful impact on migrant women and children. In the face of such egregious mistreatment of the most vulnerable seeking refuge in the United States, we cannot remain silent.

There is no justification for tearing children apart from their parents and keeping them in punitive conditions. The families and children impacted are among the most vulnerable, are often fleeing unspeakable violence and persecution in their home countries, and are not a threat to national security. While the Trump Administration has incorrectly and repeatedly claimed that the policy is the "law," in fact our government has a responsibility under U.S. immigration law to hear a person's immigration or asylum case - not to try to scare them away or prevent them from seeking protection. Deterrence policies are ineffective, as they fail to address the root causes that cause people to leave their homes in the first place, and they put families at extremely high risk of experiencing further rights violations. U.S. foreign policy, including economic and political interventionism, and immigration policies of mass deportation, are closely related to the conditions of violence, economic crisis and repression that cause such desperation in the countries from which these children and families are fleeing. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that "the practice of separating families amounts to arbitrary and unlawful interference in family life, and is a serious violation of the rights of the child." This policy is contrary to the values and principles of due process, solidarity, family unity and liberty that are embedded in U.S. law, and are also a violation of the human rights of all migrants recognized under international law, including the right to migrate, the right to seek asylum, the rights of the child, and the right to family life.

The United States has isolated itself as the only country in the international community to withdraw from the negotiation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, abandoning its commitments made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The draft Global Compact on Migration articulates a series of objectives and commitments for human rights-based, gender-responsive, child-sensitive and evidence-based policies that address the root causes of migration, reduce vulnerabilities, and promote non-custodial alternatives to immigration detention. Immigration detention is never in the best interest of the child, and as such is always a human rights violation. The physical and mental trauma caused by detention causes lifelong psychosocial and developmental problems. Community-based alternatives are more effective, more cost-

efficient and better respect human rights. The United States should pursue these alternative approaches that respect children's and families' fundamental rights to liberty, security, and human dignity.

It is inhumane to punish parents who are doing everything they can to protect their children, and to punish children by depriving them of their parents. These policies perpetuate situations of vulnerability, violate fundamental principles of international human rights law, and go against Catholic social teaching to love ones' neighbor, welcome the stranger, and respect the human dignity of every person. The Trump Administration implemented these policies, and they have the power to stop these merciless actions. We will continue to speak out against policies that dehumanize, and will uphold the rights of all migrants, oppose family separation, and demand protections for women, children and men from violence.

#### **Take Action:**

- **Call the Department of Justice at 202-353-1555.** Voice your distress with Attorney General Jeff Session's changes to asylum policy and tell him to end the policy of separating families.
- **Call your Senators and Representatives.** Let them know you oppose immigration bills that will restrict regular migration channels, split up families, harm children, and promote mass deportations ([Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018](#), [Securing America's Future Act of 2018 H.R.4760](#)), and support bills that respect migrant families' rights and end family separations ([Keep Families Together Act S.3036](#), [Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act of 2017 H.R.3923](#)).
- **Raise your voice on social media.** #FamiliesBelongTogether #KeepFamiliesTogether #ThereAreAlternatives
- **Join or organize a local rally or vigil.** [Find an event near you.](#) A number of organizations have organized a [nationwide protest](#) on Saturday, June 30. The main demonstration is scheduled to take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C.
- **Support organizations that are providing shelter, medical services, legal representation and psychosocial support to immigrant children and families.** Volunteer or donate. [Here is a list of organizations working on the Texas-Mexico border.](#)